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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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THE NATURE OF CHRIST.

"Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high-priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted."—Heb. ii. 17, 18.

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."—Heb. iv. 16.

From the time that theology received from the Greek mind a philosophic and systematic form, there has been, as compared with the sacred Scriptures, a total change of the point of view in which Christ is presented, if not universally, yet to a very great extent. The whole force of controversy has been to fix the place, the title, and the nature of Christ.

This is a dynastic idea. I do not say that it ought not to be sought out in any degree; but I do say that it is not in accordance with the structure and comprehensive aim of the New Testament; and it is not using the facts or revelations of the New Testament as they were originally used, and as they were designed to be used. It is something outside of the purposes of those facts or revelations.

The genius of the New Testament is to present, in Jesus, the most attractive and winning view of God, to inspire men with a deep sense of the divine sympathy and helpfulness; and to draw men to Christ as the One who can meet all their wants while living, when dying, and in the great life

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beyond. Over these three great circuits which the imagination makes—life, death, and eternity—Christ is represented as having dominion; and he is presented to men in such aspects as tend, according to the laws of the human soul, to draw them toward him in confidence, in love, and in an obedience which works by love. It is, therefore, as Teacher, and Guide, and Brother, and Saviour; it is as Shepherd, and Physician, and Deliverer; it is as a Mediator, a Forerunner, and a Solicitor in court, that he is familiarly represented. He is sometimes, also—though seldom in comparison with other representations—represented as a Judge or a Vindicator. The force of the representations of the gospels, and of the laws which have sprung from the gospels, is to present Christ as so seeking the highest ends of human life, and so aiming at the noblest developments of character in men, that every man who feels degraded, bound, overcome by evil, shall also feel, "Here is my Succor; here is my Remedy for that which is wrong; here is my Guide toward that which is right; here is my Help in those great emergencies for which human strength is vain." Living or dying, we are the Lord's—this is the spirit that was meant to be inculcated.

Christ came, he said himself, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might have life.

"The Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

If, then, we take our stand at the point of view through which the Scriptures were developed, we shall remove, I think, many of the difficulties which embarrass the minds of men, and which prevent their making a personal and saving use of Jesus Christ as he is presented in the Scriptures.

First, the identification of the Lord Jesus Christ with the human race has been a fertile theme of comment, of criticism and of skepticism. Many have objected to it as unworthy any true conception of the divine nature.

Now, it was not the purpose of the New Testament to undertake to show us the whole nature of God, and to give us the elements by which we could judge abstractly as to what was and what was not fitting. We are limited in our judgment of the divine nature by the elements of our own

being; for that which is not in some sense represented in us we can have no conception of. The immutable principles of truth, of honor, of justice, of love, and of mercy, in human nature, furnish us the materials by which we are enabled to judge of the divine nature. Is it not, then, worthy of our conception of God, that he should seek to win the race to confidence in him? and is there a better way for him to do it than by the identifying of himself with the race?

When Christ wished to do his kindest works he did not stand afar off, saying, "Be this done, and be that done." He took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town, and healed him. He drew near to those whom he wished to bless, and touched them. He laid his hands upon them. And that which fell out in the individual instances of Christ's life was the thing which was done in regard to the whole scheme of Christ's appearing. If God spake to men not from afar off by the word of mouth, or intermediately through great natural laws; if he sent his Son into the world to bring men, in their conditions, and according to their language, according to their modes of understanding, to a true notion of what the divine disposition and purpose were, was not that the best way in which to win their confidence? If this is so, then there cannot be a method conceived of by which the human race can be more won to confidence than by the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

If you look, in the light of an abstract divine propriety, at the whole history which is given in the gospels of the incarnation of Christ, you will reach one sort of result; but if you look at it from the side of the human mind and of human want, which is the side that is presented in the New Testament, another and an entirely different view will be arrived at. We are not put into possession of those materials by which God, standing in the midst of his moral government, universal and all-glorious, can be inspected by us, except in one particular—namely, in regard to what will do good to a race that is so low as this is and has been. Looked at from that point of view, would it not be divine beneficence, would it not stimulate human emotion, would it not tend to draw men toward God, if he should conduct his mission and

ministry upon earth so that men would feel that they could interpret his nature by the experience of their own? Would not that have the effect to win men back to him?

Let me illustrate in another way. What is that which is most becoming in woman—what, but that she should dwell with her kindred? What, but that she should should separate herself from that which is rude and coarse? What, but that all those sweeter virtues which refinement breeds should blossom from her perpetually? We think of her as the child in the cradle; as the daughter at home; as the maiden sought or won; as the young bride; and as the matron. All these elements enter into our conception of the dignity and beauty of woman. If, therefore, you were to ask, What is her sphere? and what are her functions? every one instinctively would say that her sphere and her functions were those of moral elevation, of refinement, and of intellectual culture. Every one would say that she was born to make home bright and beautiful. And yet, when that great concussion came that seemed likely to rend the continent from East to West; when a million men in the North were tramping southward, and a million men in the South were tramping northward, and all was rude warfare; when men were gathered from every side of humanity, good and bad, mingled and fighting together under the flag, where on earth could you have found more dirt, more blood, more confusion, or more rudeness than in the hospitals outlying the edges of the battle-fields? And yet, woman walked there—an angel of light and mercy. Many and many a poor soldier, the child of Christian parents, dying, was led by woman's ministration, under those adverse circumstances, from the very borders of hell to the very heights of faith and hope and belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. There, in the place most unlikely, in the last place you would have spoken of as the true sphere of woman—there woman reaped a glory that shall never die so long as there are annals of this land. And so long as there are annals of our dear old fatherland, Florence Nightingale's name will be remembered. There will never be any who will forget that it was in circumstances of humiliation, and rudeness, and confusion, circumstances where there was everything which was most

repellent to taste and refinement, that she stood to relieve suffering.

Now, when you think of the Lord Jesus Christ, if, with the Greeks, you project some great crystal scheme of government, and conceive of him as administering it; if you form, in the stithy of your imagination, an ideal of a perfect God, ruling over men, and bring that ideal into this world, do you not leave God at an inaccessible height above the heart of man? But if you say, "He was born of woman, he grew from childhood to manhood, and at thirty years of age he became a teacher," will not that, I ask, be the best thing that you could do, in case the object of this revelation is to win men? If the design is to inspire the human race with confidence and sympathy toward their Maker and their Judge, will not this be the very thing above all others that will do it? Bring the divine nature from the vast cloudy sphere beyond into this world, transmute it into the conditions in which we live, and which limit our understanding, and conceive of Jehovah as Immanuel, *God with us*, and you do that which is better calculated than anything else to present the conception of God so that men's hearts shall take hold of him. For that which we need, after all, is a tendril which shall unite us to God. Our God must not be to us as a storm nor as fire, if we are to cling to him. The storm and the fire may make men afraid of evil, but they never will call forth men's love.

You might, by the north wind, throw the convolvulus, the morning-glory, the queen of flowers, prostrate along the ground; but it is only when the warm sun gives it leave that it twines upward, about that which is to support it, and blesses it a thousand fold by its efflorescence all day long. The terrors of the Lord may dissuade men from evil; but it is the warm shining of the heart of God that brings men toward his goodness and toward him.

This view of Christ meets both theories of men's origin. If men are descended from a higher plane by the fall of their ancestors, this view of God seeking their recuperation is eminently fitting; or, if men are a race emerging from a lower plane, and seeking a spiritual condition, it is equally fitting.

In either case, what they want is a succoring God; and such was Jesus Christ as presented to the world in his incarnation.

Secondly, it gives added force to the simple narrative of Christ's life if we look at it from the point of view which we have been considering—namely, such a teaching as shall lead men to confidence in and communion with God. If you ask what is becoming in a dramatic God, or in an ideal Sovereign, you will get one result, and it will be a human result. If you ask what would be likely to inspire the human family with a profound sense of God's sympathy with mankind, and of his helpfulness toward them, would not that be the very result of the presentation of Christ's life? Look at it as the life of One who came to win men, and does it not touch the universal chords of sympathy? He was born of a woman; and that cloudy wonder, the mystery of the mother-heart, (which no poet ever described, but which was known to Raphael, half woman as he was, and which was, though imperfectly, yet marvelously, expressed in the Sistine Madonna) that wonder enveloped him. As the mother, holding her child, looks with a vague reverence upon it, so our Saviour was looked upon by his mother when he was a child in her arms. Therefore, there is not a child on the globe that has not had a Fore-runner.

As a child, Christ grew in stature and in knowledge. And that is as much a revelation as any other. Nor does it detract from a true and proper conception of divinity. For if one would make himself like unto his brethren he should begin where they began, and in everything but sin should rise with them, step by step, all the way up.

Following Christ through his childhood, we find that he was subject to his parents. Unquestionably he participated in their industries, and lived a working man, in a great northern province crowded with a population which included all manner of foreign elements, under the dominion of a foreign scepter. There, in the midst of the distresses of the people—and they were exceedingly great—he grew up a working man; and there is nothing in the history or experience of the great mass of mankind who are working men that he is not fitted to sympathize with.

Has not this already touched a universal chord? Has it not even made skepticism admire it? Men who reject as history the details of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ; men who set aside his miracles and many of his words, will not let die the *character* which he has lived and impressed upon the world's thought and the world's imagination.

One of the most affecting things that I know of is the way in which men deal with this "fiction," as they call it. They take the life of Christ, and say that it is mythical; or, they say that it is the life of an extraordinary man, of a genius, but not of a divine Being; and yet, it is a life that believer and unbeliever alike will not let die. There are all sorts of men in the various schools, who are saying of the nature and character which are attributed to Christ, "This is so wonderful a nature and character that the world would be impoverished if we were to lose it." Such impressions have been produced by the circumstances in which Christ lived among men.

Thirdly, the miracles of Christ, looked at from the same point of view, have been very much perverted by discussions, and by not being looked at along the line in which they were meant to play. They were simply charities. They were, to be sure, alleged to have a certain influence among an abject and superstitious-minded people, but Christ himself undervalued them as moral evidence. They were alternative, as evidence. "If you will not believe me for my own sake," he says, "believe me for my works' sake." He held that the radiant presentation of a divine nature ought to carry its own evidence; that when he appeared in speech, in conduct, in affluent affection, he was himself his own best evidence; and yet, if they, by reason of obtuseness, could not believe in him otherwise, he called upon them to believe in him for the sake of his miracles. That would be better than nothing. But he discouraged and dissuaded men from seeking after miracles or signs. The miracles of Christ were, almost all of them, mere acts of benevolence. He was poor; he had neither money nor raiment to give; and yet there was suffering around about him, and he relieved it. The miracles of Christ were never wrought in an ostentatious way. Never

were they wrought for the purpose of exalting himself. They were not employed where arguments failed, to carry men away by superstitious enthusiasm. Multitudes resorted to him for help—the sick, the blind, the deaf, lepers, all kinds of unfortunate people; and miracles were his means of bestowing charity upon them. No hospital had he to which he could send them; he was his own hospital. No retinue or army had he to send out among the masses of the Palestinian land. His own hand and voice were his universal instruments of mercy. His miracles were his general acts of kindness. As laid down in the gospel they represent the heart of God. And what an error is often committed in regard to the beneficent deeds of the Redeemer and Saviour of the world, as to the purposes for which they were performed! They were never performed for his own sake. If there are apparent exceptions, there are no real ones. For instance, at the baptism of Christ, the sound of a voice and the descent of a dove were not his own miracles. They were imposed upon him. And the greatest of all wonders which were wrought, in its dramatic beauty—the Transfiguration—was as much a miracle of mercy as the miracle of the loaves and fishes. The disciples had lately been driven out of Galilee, and they had come to Jerusalem, and their faith needed resuscitation—as also did his own, since he was in the form of man, not only, but had the experiences of a man; and as they stood upon the Mount, he was, as it were, lifted up before them. He seemed to them to be in the midst of a luminous atmosphere; and heavenly visitants were communing with him. Thus they were strengthened and prepared for a remote period when he should be crucified and buried out of their sight. It was intended that there should be a witchery and magic connected with this event which should hold them to their faith in spite of the lack of outward evidence. The ministration thus to the higher spiritual nature of these disciples was as bread and wine to the lower bodily wants of men.

Now, if you adopt the philosophical view, and discuss the peculiarities of Christ's miracles purely from the standpoint of nature, you will reach certain results; but if you suppose

that they will be the results contemplated by the New Testament, you are mistaken.

For instance, I reach forth my hand and draw a drowning man out of the water. Some one, hearing of it, and wishing to give a philosophical explanation of the act, takes a hand, and dissects it, and paints it. First, he paints the whole hand; then underneath he paints each finger separately; then below he paints all the muscles; and then he writes a little treatise on the structure and adaptation of the hand; and then he says, "There is my interpretation of that act." But it is not a dissected hand that the man thinks of, whom I seized at the risk of my life and rescued from the boiling flood. It does not occur to him that the hand that saved him was composed of bone, or muscle, or skin, or anything else. It was *what was done* by the hand that interpreted itself to him, and that was the all-important thing.

Miracles discussed philosophically are out of the sphere of Christian experience. What we want to know, along the line of Christ's miraculous deeds, is, that they all aimed at one thing—namely, the opening up of a more bountiful conception of divine sympathy than could have been developed under any other circumstances. Viewed in that light they are a potential evidence, not so much of the power to which they have almost always been referred, but of the inner heart of Jesus: they are a powerful development of the divine bounty and sympathy and kindness; and who has the heart to dispute them on that line?

Looked at, also, from the same point of view,—namely, that of the relations of Christ to the world for the sake of developing in men confidence in God and sympathy with him—I remark that the Saviour's suffering and death will receive new light. Everything becomes involved and difficult and inoperative the moment you discuss the history of Christ from the material and dynastic sides. Why did Christ suffer? If you say, in reply, "That he might redeem men from sin," you have said the whole; and just so soon as you begin to go back and ask, "How did his suffering redeem men from death?" you are wandering right away from the heart of Christ to the cold Greek philosophical view of him.

If you bring to me the tidings that my mother is dead she who bore me, and hovered over all my infant days, and tenderly loved me to the last, you open the flood-gates of sympathy in my soul. But suppose a physician comes to me and sits down by my side, and says, "You understand, my young friend, that there are, in the human frame a variety of systems —the vascular system, the bony system, the muscular system, the nervous system ; you understand that there are vital organs—the stomach, the liver, the heart, the brain : now, if you will listen, I will explain to you, in a philosophical manner, the causes of your mother's death. I will show you the way in which the blood ceased to circulate in her veins." He wants to read me an anatomical lecture on the nature of the reasons of my mother's death ! If I have wandered away from home and friends, and my mother is dead, and you come to break the intelligence to me, I think you will leave out of your message everything except the announcement of her death and her last words. You will say, if such be the fact, "She prayed for you, and she died exclaiming, 'My son ! O my son !'" And there is not a human heart that would not feel the power of a simple statement like this.

Tell me that he who is to be my Judge bowed his head and came into my condition ; tell me that he was not ashamed to call men his brethren ; tell me that, being in the form of God, and thinking it not robbery to be equal with God, he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, that he might minister to men ; tell me that he was tried and tempted in all points like as we are, and yet without sin, that he might know how to succor those who were in trial and temptation ; tell me that he died that his death might be a memorial of grace to men, and that he might expound to human understandings the nature of God—tell me these things, and I am satisfied. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends,"—tell me what that means. It is declared that Christ gave his life for the world ; what is the meaning of that ? Away with your barbaric notions ! Away with the idea of marshalled forces ! Away with the thought of imperial coercions ! That which I derive from the fragrance and

sweetness of that magnificent sacrifice which was made in Christ's death is sufficient for me. All that I want to know is that the heart of God is a heart that yearns for men—that it is a paternal heart by which the universe is to be lifted up and saved. I do not stop to ask what is the relation of the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ to divine law; neither do I stop to ask what its relation is to the moral government of the universe; nor do I stop to ask what is its relation to the teaching of the Old Testament. All these things may have their proper place in an outside work; but to discuss them and make them a part of Gospel truths is to go not only out of, but against, the example and spirit of the New Testament; for that which the sufferings and death of Christ mean to you and to me is that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son to die for it, and that in this sacrifice we have the manifestation, not only of the power, but of the disposition of God to save us from animalism, from degradation, from guilt, and from sin that breeds guilt, and to bring us into a knowledge of the spiritual life, and make us sons of God.

Therefore, was there ever such a perversion as that by which theology has blunted the sensibilities and frozen the instincts of men, and presented to them a sort of Greek philosophy of the atonement of Christ Jesus—by which that sort of mechanical balancing of forces which men have called atonement, *atonement*, ATONEMENT, has been urged upon men—when that which the human heart wanted and Christ and the New Testament gave was not a substantive noun, meaning some arrangement or plan, but the truth of a living, personal Saviour? I can say of these scholastic discussions, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." But yes, I do know where they have laid him: they have laid him under the dry bones of philosophy. They have covered him up with slavish systems which impose upon men the performance of certain duties, the observance of given forms and ceremonies, and obedience to certain rules, as the conditions of their salvation. Acts, *acts*, ACTS, have been prescribed for men, when all that they wanted to know was that there was

a stream flowing out from under the throne of God, and forever carrying to men life-giving influences. This stream, sent forth out of the center of God's throne, is the impulse of the centuries. It is the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation to every man that believes.

So accepted, the sufferings of Christ, his death, his resurrection and glory, are powers; but the moment you turn them into a philosophy they are dead and dry, and they crackle under the pot of discussion until all its contents are evaporated and gone.

I remark, once more, that the views of Christ's resurrection, his ascension, his glorification, and his reigning state in heaven, as they are presented in the Scriptures, are exceedingly comforting, and exert an amazing influence; but when they are presented by close analysis, by a philosophical statement, they lose all their power, and shake down upon us no fruit whatever.

Christ is our Forerunner; this we can form some conception of. He is the first-fruits of them that slept; this, while it brings no special idea to us, to the Jew brought most joyous associations. He is our Mediator; he is our Intercessor:—we instinctively feel the force of the helpfulness of these figures.

Now, you will spoil it all if you go into a complete analysis, and specify everything that you can imagine of a forerunner, and tell what he does do and what he does not do; if you undertake to draw an exact parallel between the first-fruits of them that slept and the first-fruits of the harvests of the Jews; if you undertake to dissect and regulate the offices of a mediator between God and man, or a mediator of the new covenant; if you undertake to describe the functions of an intercessor. All the aroma will evaporate if you go thus into detail. No: if you tell me that Christ died for men, and that he now lives in heaven for them; that he is their Intercessor near to God, the Source of all power; that he thinks of them and governs them; that he is bringing many sons and daughters home to glory; that he is our Forerunner in the world beyond; that he is our Solicitor in court—if you tell me these things, I am comforted; but the more you un-

dertake to refine these metaphors, and reduce them to exactitude, the more you take away the comfort which might be derived from them. Let them stand in their simplicity, if you would have them powerful in their influence upon the imagination, the heart and the life.

If you take a cluster of flowers just as they are, with the dew upon them, how exquisite they are! but you tarnish them by just so much as you meddle with them. Every one who dissects a flower must make up his mind to lose it.

That sweetest flower of heaven, from which exhales perfume forever and forever; that dearest and noblest conception that the human imagination ever gathered out of father and mother, out of leader and benefactor, out of shepherd and protector, out of companion and brother and friend; all that ever was gracious in government—these various elements, rising together, are an interpretation, in a kind of large and vague way, to the imagination, and through the imagination to the heart, that there is, at the center of universal authority toward which we are all going, One who cares for us; One who bears our burdens; One who guides our career; One who hears our cry; and One, though he does not interpret himself to us, who will at last make it plain that all things have worked together for the good of those that have trusted in him.

Now, a man, as a philosopher, may preach Christ from beginning to end, and yet his people may grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ; but that is not the general result of such preaching. The way is to preach Christ, and to aim at preaching Christ, so that the souls of the people shall be built up in the Lord Jesus Christ; and it is exactly in this way that I have desired to preach Christ among you.

Oh, my brethren, we are not far from the end of our journey. It matters very little what this world and time have for us. The other world is near to us, and it matters everything how we shall land there. We have our burdens, our crosses, our poignant sorrows, sickness and death, embarrassments, bankruptcy, trials, and if not outward scourgings yet inward scourgings. We are not exempt from the great lot of mankind; and we go crying often with prone heads. We are

like bulrushes before the wind, bowed down to the very earth. And is it a comfort for you to know that there is a God who thinks of you? to know that there is One who is crying out in the silence, if you could only by your spiritual hearing listen, saying, "Come boldly to the throne of grace, and obtain mercy and help in time of need"?

O throne of iron, from which have been launched terrible lightnings and thunders that have daunted men! O throne of crystal, that has coldly thrown out beams upon the intellect of mankind! O throne of mystery, around about which have been clouds and darkness!—O throne of *Grace*, where He sits regnant who was my brother, who has tasted of my lot, who knows my trouble, my sorrow, my yearning and longing for immortality! O Jesus, crowned, not for thine own glory, but with power of love for the emancipation of all struggling spirits!—thou art my God—*my* God!

And is he *your* God? Ah, yes! I beseech of everyone who has any trouble, everyone who needs help, to try the help of God given through Jesus in faith and trust. You cannot please him better. Come, lay down your anxiety and your strivings; lift up your heart, and believe that He who has guided his people like a flock will guide you, and perfect you, and bring you home to immortality.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We rejoice to believe, our heavenly Father, that there are other homes, higher mansions, a nobler parentage, higher and serener occupations, and a purer life than those which befall them who are born into this world. Here we are tossed upon many currents and waves. Here we are surrounded with a few things that overbear us. We are biased by our sympathy. We are drawn hither and thither, partly through ignorance, and partly through unchecked desires. We are filled with weakness where we should be strong, and with strength where we should be weak. We scarcely carry our souls with any balance, or constancy, or high aim or valiant endeavor. When we look upon our life we are discontented with it. How vast is our strife for how little! How eager, how earnest we are, and what expenditure of pain and of joy we make for things that perish in the using! How much of our life wastes itself and falls away uselessly, as a river in the wilderness! How much of our experience is at cross-purposes! Our understanding is divided. Our conscience is against our conduct. Yearnings we have, but no answer. There is no response to our questions.

When we look upon ourselves there is nothing that can make us proud, but much that makes us humble. It is only when we look at thee and at the declaration of thy purposes that we begin to take heart. For, if we are the children of God, and are at school now, learning those lessons which shall be clearly known in immortality; if thou art working in us to will and to do of thy good pleasure; if thou art guiding us through this wilderness into the promised land, there to know as we are known, and to be as sons of God, as kings and priests unto thee—then we look up; and in hope we live, by hope we are saved. But from that which we see we have very little comfort. The whole world around about us is not enough for a soul that has been touched with seraphic fire. The things which from day to day present themselves to our senses and to our tastes leave hunger behind. It is only the bread which thou givest that satisfies hunger; it is only the water which thou givest that quenches thirst. Grant, we pray thee, soul-food to us to-day. Bring every one of us near to the Lord Jesus Christ. May we discern Him whom God in his infinite mercy sent to make known to us the innermost depths of the divine disposition, and to make manifest to us the government of God in its relations to our elevation and salvation. And we pray that thou wilt bring the presence of Christ clearly to the apprehension of every one of us, so that we may look upon him as our sacrifice, living, and dying, and living again forever for us. May we be able to hear him say to us, by name, Thou art mine. May we feel that there is in the heart of Jesus a place for every experience, for every want of every human soul that would work upward; and that he is without beauty and without comeliness only to those who turn their back upon him.

Grant, we pray thee, that every wandering, wavering, unstable heart may respond to his call, and find in him a Shepherd, and that control by which it shall be saved from that which seeks its destruction,

and shall be kept unto salvation. Grant that all who are in distress of mind may hear him saying, Come unto me, and I will give you rest. Grant that every one who is consciously weak and sick of soul may know him as a Physician, ministering to those who need him rather than to those who need him not. May every one have faith in Christ over against his utmost necessities, as the All-in-All, the Light, the Food, the Way, the Door, the Glory, the Immortality.

We pray, O Lord Jesus, that thou wilt be that Comforter by which thou hast promised to draw near to every one who needs consolation, to throw the light of thy love upon all the scenes of life, and to cheer those who are in darkness. Thou that didst teach thy servants of old to sing hymns and make prayers at night while they were fast in the stocks, grant that any who find themselves in prison and in midnight darkness may be able still to lift up their voices and sing hymns and psalms to God. Thou that didst open the prison doors for the deliverance of thy servants, grant that any who are immured and shut up unto themselves may find the hand of God leading them out of darkness and doubt and trouble. Grant, we pray thee, that any who are cast out, and who feel themselves to be alone, may find thee coming to them, as thou didst go to him whom the synagogue cast out, and reveal thyself unto them to their joy and to their instruction.

O Lord, may there be in us a higher understanding, a more tender heart, and a conscience that is willing to be guided aright. This morning may the word of thy truth fall, not as rain upon the sand, but as rain upon a fruitful garden.

Grant thy blessing upon those who are strangers in our midst; upon those whose hearts go far back to friends that they have left behind them. Wilt thou care for their dear ones of whom they are thinking, and take care of them.

Be near to those who are in perplexity and doubt respecting their business. Guide them in secular affairs. Be present in every household where there is trouble, to give consolation, to rebuke, to cheer, to purify. Draw near to all those, this day, who attempt to make known to such as are around about them the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. May they be taught by thy Spirit in their souls. May they have a living interpretation of thy Word. May they be able to go to their classes and say, Behold what the Lord hath done for me; He will do the same for you.

May the wanderers be brought back. May the outcasts be restored. May the truth of Christ be sweet and winning to all on every side.

Bless, we pray thee, all the churches in this city. Bless their pastors. Grant that they may be strengthened by thee to sow and to reap, and that there may be gathered, abundantly, of their labors into the garden of the Lord.. And we pray that thou wilt bless the churches of every denomination. Bring them more and more together in the Spirit of God and of humanity.

We pray for the nation. Be pleased to bless the President of these United States, and all who are united with him in authority. We pray that he may be guided in times critical and perilous so that thy name shall be honored, and the welfare not only of this

nation, but of all nations, shall be promoted. And may that time which is beginning to dawn come speedily unto the nations of the earth, everywhere, when they shall feel that the welfare of one is the welfare of all. Grant, we pray thee, that nations may feel that they are members one of another, seeking the things which are for the benefit of the whole world.

Let thy kingdom come, let thy will be done upon earth as it is in heaven. We ask it for Christ's sake. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, we pray that thy blessing may rest upon the truth as it has been spoken. Grant that it may be winnowed, so that only the pure grain shall be sown in the hearts of thy people. Draw near to us, that we may be able to draw near to thee. Awaken in us again the old love for a better life. Draw us, we beseech of thee, by that confidence, by that trust, which thou dost inspire in thy true children. O thou that takest away the sins of the world, to every one who is bent with burdens, to every one who is in the prison-house of trouble, and to every one who is guilty before thee, give the assurance that their sins are forsaken and forgiven. Thou that art the strength of thy people, give consciously to every one a portion of that strength. Thou that hast infinite rest in thyself, give peace to all who are troubled on earth. And when, at last, through storm, through struggle, over the wave, through the sea, we reach that land which is unwet with tears, we will, with one united acclaim of joy, ascribe to thee, Jehovah, that sittest on the throne, praise, dominion, honor, glory, power, and ecstacy and constancy of love, forever and forever. *Amen.*

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